

N.J. Victims of Crime Compensation Board

When it seems no one cares, we do!

Quarterly Newsletter

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Compensation for Seton Hall University Dorm Fire Victims

When Essex County Prosecutor Donald Campolo made the announcement that the January 19, 2000 dormitory fire at Boland Hall was an arson, the Victims of Crime Compensation Board went into action to contact all 656 residents of that building.

The initial mailing to all of the victims went out the week of August 6, 2001. They reside all over the United States and as far away as Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, France and Taipei. A specially revised application was color-coded to help expedite the processing of these claims.

Students and their families were informed of their eligibility for reimbursement of medical bills, psychotherapy fees and loss of wages pursuant to the rules and regulations of the Board.

Of the 656 residents of Boland Hall, three are deceased and two families have been in contact with the Board via applications and phone inquiries.

A follow-up mailing went out the week of August 27, 2001, as a reminder, which resulted in applications and phone inquiries from dozens of victims and their families.

Among the inquiries were requests for counseling referrals; many victims who initially did not feel that they needed psychotherapy or couldn't afford it were now looking to avail themselves of these services. Many decided to file applications even though they were not in need of compensation now, leaving open the opportunity for counseling at a future time.

Even the compensation for unreimbursed payments was a welcome relief to both students and their families. While the VCCB is the payor of last resort, any assistance was welcomed by these victims. Some families had more than one member involved in this incident and many parents lost wages to stay home with their children while they recovered. They were grateful for any assistance with lost wages, as were students who were not able to work due to the nature of their injuries and/or their emotional state.

While the Board could not replace lost personal items, tuition or compensate for pain and suffering, all who contacted us were pleased to know that we are an agency that lives up to our motto —

“When it seems no one cares, we do!”

What's New?

* Chairman James O'Brien resigned as of September 1, 2001. Commissioner Matt Scannapieco is now the Acting Chairman of the Victims of Crime Compensation Board.

* As of July 1, 2001, the funeral allowance in homicide cases is \$5,000. The allowance for incidents before July 1, 2001 remains at \$3,500.

* This is the third issue of our newsletter; your opinions and questions are welcome. In future issues we will address any questions in a Q & A column.

*Feel free to reproduce
any article in this newsletter.*

Frequently Asked Questions

“What will help process a stolen cash request from a senior citizen?”

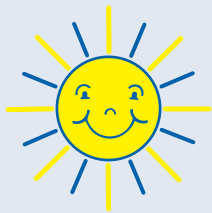
*A police report and the name, department and phone number of the law enforcement officer or detective who is handling the case.

*Some form of income verification (copies of tax returns or bank statements).

*Medicaid recipients should include a copy of their Medicaid card.

As the Nation mourns for the victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the people of the United States, the State of New Jersey Victims of Crime Compensation Board is offering any assistance to the New York State Crime Victims Board in coordinating services to the victims and their families.

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Commissioner's Corner

By Jacob C. Toporek, Commissioner

The state in which the incident occurred retains primary jurisdiction for compensation benefits. Some state rules allow their residents to apply for secondary jurisdiction compensation for expenses not fully covered by the primary program. New Jersey will accept secondary jurisdiction applications for its residents.

In the case of the World Trade Center (WTC), the N.Y. Crime Victims Board (CVB) has primary jurisdiction. The N.J. Victims of Crime Compensation Board (VCCB) has been assisting N.J. victims in filing applications with the CVB. Claims filed with N.Y. are tracked to ensure access to secondary jurisdiction eligibility in N.J. at a later date. Since N.Y. compensation benefits will be greater than the \$25,000 statutory maximum in N.J., it is recommended that application first be made with the CVB.

NY will pay for all reasonable medical, funeral and counseling expenses. Loss of earnings or support, however, is limited to \$30,000. NY will not pay transportation costs for family members. The NJ VCCB will compensate victims for loss of earnings/support incurred in excess of the \$30,000 maximum the CVB allows. NJ will also assist with some family travel costs within guidelines set in its rules.

Massachusetts will take primary jurisdiction for victims aboard the airplanes which left Boston and struck the WTC. Similarly, California will address its resident victims of the Pennsylvania crash. Virginia and Pennsylvania retain primary jurisdiction for the Pentagon and the crash, respectively. Secondary jurisdiction claims are eligible in N.J. for state victims of these incidents, as well.

Every effort will be made to expeditiously process the claims filed by NJ victims or their surviving families. For assistance, please call the VCCB at 1-800-242-0804.